

# 1 Introduction

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The various editions of *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice* by Keith Dinnie highlight nation branding cases from various continents. This supplemental book, *Nation Branding in Europe*, is based on specific cases of nation branding strategies in Europe. Academics and practitioners from various European countries were invited to participate and write a chapter on the branding of a specific European country. The chapters are based on the knowledge and opinions of these various experts.

Given that Europe is composed of over 40 countries, we were unable to include one case for each country. We decided the best approach would be to include cases from a few countries that would represent what is currently being done in Europe.

Twelve European countries were selected for this edition. Our criteria for selecting the countries were size and diversity. To meet the size requirement the six largest countries in Europe – France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain and the United Kingdom – were selected. To meet the diversity requirement, three medium-sized and three small-sized countries from different European regions were selected. The medium-sized countries include the Netherlands (representative of Northern Europe), Poland (representative of Eastern Europe) and Sweden (representative of Scandinavia). The three small-size countries include Ireland due to its success as a country for foreign direct investment (FDI); Portugal due to its success as a tourism destination and Estonia due to its economic boom and for being known as one of the three Baltic tigers.

The goal of this book is to understand how various European countries are developing their nation brand strategy. Do countries have a nation-branding strategy? Who manages the nation brand? Is there a governance model to help the brand management process? What are the challenges related to the management and implementation of a nation brand strategy?

By and large, it is apparent that all governments are committed to promoting their country in international markets. Nonetheless each country approaches nation branding distinctly. These cases also highlight the complexity of a place brand strategy. Only a few countries have been able to manage their brand strategically and consistently over the long term.

From these cases, we can conclude that just a few countries have developed a cohesive successful branding strategy. These countries understand what they are doing and have clearly put into practice a long-term nation brand strategy. These nation brand strategies are research-based, include a well-defined governance model and take a multisectoral approach. Those nation brand strategies typically involve the central government, but not necessarily a particular political party. Various stakeholders of society are involved. In doing so, the nation brand strategy is not linked to a political party and is easily accepted by various governments. This is key for maintaining a long-term brand strategy. One can evaluate how successful those strategies have been through the continued growth of the economies of these countries.

However, there are some countries that regard nation branding as a political tool. When this happens the nation brand strategy suffers from limitations of scope, duration, involvement and effectiveness. The strategy is developed by the particular political party in power and is based solely on its vision for the country. In these cases, a model of governance may exist but the strategy is grounded in the political vision and opinions of the current government in power. The strategy is not research-based. This also means that the strategy will change depending on the political party in power and that some politicians might be willing to change course if they think they will win votes. When this happens, the independence of the brand managers is also reduced.

A less effective approach to nation branding is where countries develop a number of advertising campaigns that they consider to be a nation-branding strategy. With this approach, the stakeholder engagement is generally low, the governance model is unclear and the market is poorly understood.

Some countries take a sector-by-sector approach to the country's branding strategy. When this occurs it often means that the more powerful and better organized industries take over the brand. This is most evident in the tourism industry, which operates in a highly competitive marketplace. The problem with this approach is that many sectors get left out of the nation brand strategy. We can even say that in these countries no nation brand strategy exists; what actually exists is a destination brand strategy.

We can conclude from these cases that one of the biggest challenges in running a country as a brand is the strategic management of different places within a country, whether they are cities or regions. Cities and regions have

elected governments that often have their own branding strategies. In some cases, there is very little communication between the cities, regions and the central government. Lack of communication between these places can result in an inconsistent message, which puts the implementation of a more effective overarching strategy for the country at risk. This is most commonly seen in the cases of larger countries that typically have strong cities and regions.

There are three important concepts that emerge from the case studies: brand architecture, governance models and research-based strategy. An effective brand architecture system enables places within the country to communicate with a central government. Therefore, a well-defined brand architecture makes it possible to manage the country's brand more efficiently. Developing a model of governance that involves a wide range of stakeholders is key since doing this gives the brand a better chance of resisting changes in government and increases its efficiency over the long term. Finally, a nation brand strategy should be developed on the basis of research. A research-based strategy facilitates two things: acceptance of the strategy and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

Each contributor in this book was selected on the basis of their knowledge of the country and their expertise in the field of place branding. The contributors have distinct backgrounds and their current positions are varied as well. Some are academics who research place branding, some are consultants and some work for organizations that manage a place brand. Each chapter is written by a different expert therefore, in addition to bringing their professional expertise on the subject, each contributor lends their own personality and style to the chapter. One interesting note is that despite the contributor's varied backgrounds and current positions, they all approach nation branding in a broadly similar way.

After reading this book, our hope is that readers will understand the concept of nation branding better and appreciate the strategies that different European countries have implemented.